

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12, 16, 17, and 19 are amended by this response. Claim 7 is hereby canceled. Claims 15 and 20 were and remain canceled. New claims 23-26 are added by this response.

None of these claim modifications is done with prejudice, and all of the claim modifications are fully supported.

After entry of this response, the pending claims are claims 1-6, 8-14, 16-19, and 21-26. Of these twenty-three pending claims, only amended claims 1 and 19 are independent claims.

Claim Rejections based on 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-14, 16-19, 21, and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Applicant submits that some of the changes to independent claims 1 and 19 address the Examiner's § 112 concerns.

Claim Rejections based on 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-11, 13, 14, and 17-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Published U.S. Patent Application No. US 2003/0076011 A1 to Brownfiel, Jr. (hereinafter "Brownfiel") and U.S. Patent No. 6,056,122 to Takeuchi (hereinafter "Takeuchi"). Applicant notes that claim 20 was and remains canceled, and thus this rejection must instead be a rejection of claims 1-11, 13, 14, 17-19, 21, and 22.

Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Brownfiel, Takeuchi, and U.S. Patent No. 4,460,102 to Barringer (hereinafter “Barringer”).

Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Brownfiel, Takeuchi, and U.S. Patent No. 6,708,697 to Ziff (hereinafter “Ziff”).

Of these rejected claims, the sole pending independent claims (which are claims 1 and 19) are rejected over the combination of Brownfiel and Takeuchi. Brownfiel and Takeuchi thus are the two main relied-upon references, and Barringer and Ziff are secondary relied-upon references.

Each of applicant’s two pending independent claims is hereby amended to recite, in part, an inspection unit that provides a sealed airtight environment. The inspection unit is able to open to receive an object (such as mail) and then close to provide the sealed airtight environment. The inspection unit includes a lid section and a base section. The lid section includes supporting sides and a transparent top surface, and the supporting sides include at least one glove member. The inspection unit also includes a seal that is disposed below the at least one glove member and that is formed between the supporting sides and the base section when the inspection unit is closed so as to provide the sealed airtight environment.

An embodiment of an inspection unit recited in these claims is illustrated in Figure 1 of the application, and, as can be seen from Figure 1, a user of the inspection unit can utilize the at least one glove member to manipulate and visibly inspect an object such as suspicious mail which has been placed inside the inspection unit. Because the seal is disposed below the at least one glove member, there is no visual obstruction between the transparent top surface of the lid section and the least one glove member. Unobstructed visibility is an important feature when handling a suspicious object such as suspicious mail that may be potentially dangerous.

In sharp contrast to the inspection unit recited in applicant’s amended independent claims, Brownfiel discloses a containment and testing enclosure that includes a thin rectangular lid and an open box like base in which gloves are provided. In use, the thin rectangular lid is secured on top of the base by a gasket arrangement supported by a flange extending around a top rim of the base. Accordingly, a user attempting to visually inspect a piece of mail will have their view at least partially obstructed by the gasket arrangement. For example, if the user were to place the enclosure of Brownfiel on a desk or bench, the gasket arrangement would directly

impede the users view of the glove and mail (or other object being inspected) which may lead to the user misidentifying the mail.

Brownfiel simply does not teach or suggest at least the inspection unit recited in each of the amended independent claims.

It is noted that applicant's amended independent claims recite not just an inspection unit but also a transportation unit which can receive the inspection unit.

Applicant disagrees with the way Takeuchi is characterized and used in the action. However, even if it is assumed for the sake of argument that Takeuchi discloses the transportation unit recited in applicant's amended independent claims, the combination of Brownfiel and Takeuchi would not have resulted in the subject matter of either of applicant's amended independent claims because it has been established above that Brownfiel does not teach or suggest at least the inspection unit recited in each of the amended independent claims. Also, Takeuchi is silent about applicant's claimed inspection unit.

Applicant also submits that neither of the two relied-upon secondary references (that is, Barringer and Ziff) provides what each of Brownfiel and Takeuchi lacks, and thus no combination of all or some of Brownfiel, Takeuchi, Barringer, and Ziff could have resulted in an inspection unit as recited in each of applicant's amended independent claims.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, applicant requests reconsideration of all rejections in the Office's action, and applicant also requests allowance of all pending claims in due course.

If a personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call applicant's undersigned representative at the number provided below.

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Respectfully submitted,
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